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UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 002601

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [AMED](#) [PGOV](#) [CDC](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: LEPTOSPIROSIS OUTBREAK WIDENS FOLLOWING TROPICAL
STORM NOEL

¶1. Summary. Extensive rains and flooding from Tropical Storm Noel have resulted in an outbreak of leptospirosis in the Dominican Republic that has caused the deaths of at least 29 people. As many as 300 cases are suspected across the country according to news reports, with over 291 confirmed as of November 21. Dominican Ministry of Health (MOH) officials have concluded a diagnosis and treatment algorithm to be printed and posted in all emergency sites, and the Ministries of Environment, Health and Agriculture are establishing a plan so adequate measures are taken to stop the outbreak. USAID has been in contact with the MoH and with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and offered to contact the CDC to bring in an epidemiologist and a zoonosis expert. Although PAHO considered that this support was needed, to date no formal request has come from the MoH. End Summary.

¶2. Extensive rains and flooding from Tropical Storm Noel have resulted in an outbreak of leptospirosis in the Dominican Republic over the past two weeks that the press is calling an epidemic. Approximately 300 new cases of leptospirosis have been reported, although not all confirmed, since the passage of Noel, resulting in the deaths of at least 29 people. This recent outbreak also means that the annual figure of Leptospirosis cases will significantly exceed last year's number. This outbreak adds to the Dominican Republic's ongoing battle to contain dengue fever and is putting considerable strain on the health services infrastructure in the country.

¶3. Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals. In humans it causes a wide range of symptoms, including high fever, severe headache, chills, muscle aches, and vomiting, and may include jaundice, red eyes, abdominal pain, diarrhea or a rash. If the disease is not treated, the patient could develop kidney damage, meningitis, liver failure, and respiratory distress and in rare cases death. Leptospirosis is usually caused by exposure to water contaminated with the urine of infected animals, like rats, pigs, cattle, horses, dogs and wild animals. Humans become infected through contact with water, food, or soil containing urine from these infected animals.

¶4. To deal with this outbreak, MOH officials have concluded a diagnosis and treatment algorithm to be printed and posted in all emergency sites. The algorithm is intended to assure that adequate treatment is given to limit fatalities. In addition, the Ministries of Environment, Health and Agriculture are establishing a plan so adequate measures are taken to stop the outbreak.

¶5. USAID's Health and Population technical team has been in regular communication with officials at both the MOH and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). USAID has offered to contact CDC to bring in an epidemiologist and a zoonosis expert. Although PAHO considered that this support was needed, to date no formal request has come from the MoH. In

the meantime, PAHO has brought in Dr. Raymond Douglas, a zoonosis expert, who works under the PAHO-CDC agreement in Guatemala. He arrived November 19 and is already working on the leptospirosis outbreak.

16. Post's Health Unit has issued a Management Notice to Embassy staff advising individuals to take a variety of precautions to avoid contracting the disease. In addition, the Consular Section has issued a warden message with similar information.

BULLEN